RAGGLES, Or THE MAKING OF A NEW YORKER. by O. Henry.

On Fifth Avenue Raggles, Successful Suitor Of Many Cities Stood Bashful Like Any Country Swain....

BESIDES many other things, Raggles was a poet. He was called a tramp; but that was only an elliptical way of saying that he was a philosopher, an artist, a traveler, a naturalist, and a discoverer. But most of all, he was a poet. In all his life he never wrote a line of verse; he lived his poetry. His "Odyssey" would have been a Limerick had it been written. But, to linger with the primary proposition, Raggles was a poet.

Raggues' specialty, had he been driven to ink and paper, would have been sonnets to the cities. He studies cities as women study their reflections in mirrors; as children study the glue and sawdust of a dislocated doll; as men who write about wild animals study the cages in the zoo. A city to Raggles was not merely a pile of bricks and mortar, peopled by a certain number of inhabitants; it was a thing with a soul characteristic and distinct; an individual conglomeration of life, with its own peculiar essence, flavor, and feeling. Two thousand miles to the north and south, east and west, Raggles wandered in poetic fervor, taking the cities to his breast. He footed it on dusty roads or sped magnificently in freight cars, counting time as of no account. And when he had found the heart of a city and listened to its secret confession, he strayed on, restless, to another. Fickle Raggles!—but perhaps he had not met the civic corporation that could engage and hold his critical fancy.

Through the ancient poets we have learned that the cities are feminine. So they were to poet Raggles; and his mind carried a concrete and clear conception of the figure that symbolized and typified each one that he had wooed.

Chicago seemed to swoop down upon him with a breezy suggestion of Mrs. Partington, plumes and patchouli, and to disturb his rest with a soaring and beautiful stag of future promise. But Raggles would awake to a sense of shivering cold and a haunting impression of ideals lost in a depressing aura of potato salad and fish.

Thus Chicago affected him. Perhaps there is a vagueness and inaccuracy in the description; but that is Raggle's fault. He should have recorded his sensations in magazine poems.

Pittsburg impressed him as the play of "Othello" performed in the Russian language in a railroad station by Dockstader's minstrels, with "Mrs. Black Is Black" for a curtain raiser. A royal and generous lady this Pittsburg, though—homely, hearty, with flushed face, washing the dishes in a silk dress and white kid slippers, and bidding Raggles sit before the roaring fireplace and drink champagne with her pigs' feet and fried potatoes.

New Orleans had simply gazed down upon him from a balcony. He could see her pensive, starry eyes and catch the flutter of her fan, and that was all. Only once he came face to face with her. It was at dawn, when she was flushing the red bricks at the banquette with a pail of water. She laughed and hummed a chansonette and filled Raggles' shoes with ice-cold water. Allons!

Boston constructed herself to the poetic Raggles in an erratic and singular way. It seemed to him that he had drunk cold tea and that the city was a white, cold cloth that had been bound tightly around his brow to spur him to some unknown but tremendous mental effort. And, after all, he came to shovel snow for a livelihood; and the cloth becoming wet, tightened its knots and could not be removed.

Indefinite and unintelligible ideas, you will say; but your disapprobation should be tempered with gratitude, for these are poet's fancies—and suppose you had come upon them in verse!

One day Raggles came and laid siege to the heart of the great city of Manhattan. She was the greatest of all; and he wanted to learn her note in the scale; to taste and appraise and classify and solve and label her and arrange her with the other cities that had given him up the secret of their individuality. And here we cease to be Raggles' translator, and become his chronicler.

Raggles landed from a ferryboat one morning and walked into the core of the town with the blase air of a cosmopolitan. He was dressed with care to play the role of an "unidentified man." No country, race, class, clique, union, party, clan, or bowling association could have claimed him. He had shaved himself clean early that day in Newark with an edge of a fragment of glass broken from the bottom of an empty wine bottle. His clothing, which had been donated to him piecemeal by citizens of different height, but same number of inches around the heart, was not yet as uncomfortable to his figure as those specimens of raiment, self measured, that are railroaded to you by transcontinental tailors with a suit case, suspenders, silk handkerchief, pearl studs, all the back numbers of "Frenzied Finance" in the pockets as a bonus. Without money—as a poet should be—but with the ardor of an astronomer discovering a new star in the chorus of the milky way, or a man who has seen ink suddenly flow from the fountain pen, Raggles wandered into the great city.

Late in the afternoon he drew out of the road and commotion with a look of dumb terror on his countenance. He was defeated, puzzled, discomfited, frightened. Other cities had been to him as long primer to read; as country maidens quickly to fathom; as send-price-of-subscription-with-answer rebuses to solve; as oyster cocktails to a swallow; but here was one as cold, glittering, serene, impossible as a four-carat diamond in a window to a lover outside fingering damply in his pocket his ribbon-counter salary.

The greetings of the other cities he had known—their homespun kindliness, their human gamut of rough charity, friendly curses, garrulous curiosity, and easily estimated credulity or indifference. This city of Manhattan gave him no clue; it was walled against him. Like a river of adamant it flowed past him in the streets. Never an eye was turned upon him; no voice spoke to him. His heart yearned for the clap of Pittsburg's sooty hand on his shoulder; for Chicago's menacing but social yawp in his ear; for the pale and cleemosynary stare through the Bostonian eyeglass—even for the precipitate but malicious boot-toe of Louisville or St. Louis.

On Fifth Avenue Raggles, successful suitor of many cities, stood, bashful, like any country swain. For the first time he experienced the poignant humiliation of being ignored. And when he tried to reduce this brilliant, swiftly changing, ice-cold city to a formula he failed utterly. Poet though he was, it offered him no color, no similes, no points of comparison, no flaw in its polished facets, no handle by which he could hold it up and view its shape and structure, as he familiarly and often contemptuously had done with other towns. The houses were interminable ramparts loopholed for defense; the people were bright but bloodless specters passing in sinister and selfish array.

The thing that weighed heaviest on Raggles' soul and clogged his poet's fancy was the spirit of absolute egoism that seemed to saturate the people as toys are saturated with paint. Each one that he considered appeared a monster of abominable and insolent conceit. Humanity was gone from them; they were toddling idols of stone and varnish, worshiping themselves and greedy for, though oblivious of, worship from their fellow graven images. Frozen, cruel, implacable, impervious, cut to an identical pattern, they hurried on their ways like statues brought by some miracle to motion, while soul and feeling lay unaroused in the reluctant marble!

Gradually Raggles became conscious of certain types. One was an elderly gentleman with a snow-white, short beard, pink, unwrinkled face and stony, sharp blue eyes, attired in the fashion of a gilded youth, who seemed to personify the city's wealth, ripeness and frigid unconcern. Another type was a woman, tall, beautiful, clear as a steel engraving, goddess-like, calm, clothed like the princess of old, with eyes as coldly blue as the reflection of sunlight on a glacier. And another was a by-product of this town of marionettes—a broad, swaggering, grim, threateningly sedate fellow, with a jowl as large as a harvested wheat field, the complexion of a baptized infant and the knuckles of a prize fighter. This type leaned against cigar signs and viewed the world with frapped contumely.

A poet is a sensitive creature, and Raggles soon shriveled in the bleak embrace of the undecipherable. The chill, sphynx-like, ironical, illegibile, unnatural, ruthless expression of the city left him downcast and bewildered. Had it no heart? Better the woodpile, the scolding of vinegar-faced housewives at back doors, the kindly spleen of bartenders behind provincial free-lunch counters, the amiable truculence of rural constables, the kicks, arrests and happy-go-lucky chances of the other vulgar, loud, crude cities than this freezing heartlessness.

Raggles summoned his courage and sought alms from the populace. Unheeding, regardless, they passed on without the wink of an eyelash to testify that they were conscious of his existence. And then he said to himself that this fair but pitiless city of Manhattan was without a soul; that its inhabitants were manikins moved by wires and springs, and that he was alone in a great wilderness.

Raggles started to cross the avenue. There was a blast, a roar, a hissing and a crash as something struck him and hurled him over and over six yards from where he had been. As he was coming down like the stick of a rocket the earth and all the cities thereof turned to a fractured dream.

Raggles opened his eyes. First an odor made itself known to him—an odor of the earliest spring flowers of paradise. And then a hand soft as a falling petal touched his brow. Bending over him was the woman clothed like the princess of old, with blue eyes, now soft and humid with human sympathy. Under his head on the pavement were silks and furs. With Raggles' hat in his hand and with his face pinker than ever from a vehement burst of oratory against reckless driving, stood the elderly gentleman who personified the city's wealth and ripeness. From a nearby cafe hurried the by-product with the vast jowl and baby complexion. He bore a glass full of a crimson fluid that suggested delightful possibilities.

"Drink dis, sport," said the by-product, holding the glass to Raggles' lips.

Hundreds of people huddled around in a moment, their faces wearing the deepest concern. Two flattering and gorgeous policemen got into the circle and pressed back the overplus of samaritans. An old lady in a black shawl spoke loudly of camphor, and a newsboy slipped one of his papers under Raggles' elbow, where it lay on the muddy pavement. A brisk young man with a notebook was asking for names.

A bell clanged importantly, and the ambulance cleaned a lane through the crowd. A cool surgeon slipped into the midst of affairs.

"How do you feel, old man?" asked the surgeon, stooping easily to his task. The princess of silks and satins wiped a red drop or two from Raggles' brow with a fragrant cobweb.

"Me?" said Raggles, with a seraphic smile, "I feel fine."

He had found the heart of his new city.

In three days they let him leave his cot for the convalescent ward in the hospital. He had been there an hour when the attendants heard sounds of conflict. Upon investigation they found that Raggles had assaulted and damaged a brother convalescent—a glowering transient whom a freight train collision had sent him to be patched up.

"What's all this about?" inquired the head nurse.

"He was runnin' down me town," said Raggles."

"What town?" asked the nurse.

"Noo York," said Raggles.

Wittrock, "The Lone Bandit," Answers Last Summons

A SHORT dispatch from Leavenworth, Kan., on December 2, announced the death of Frank Wittrock, the man who carried out, single-handed, the robbery of a train on the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad on the night of October 25, 1886, and secured $5,000 in money and $20,000 non-negotiable securities.

Wittrock was finally caught after eluding detectives for a long time, having spent but $2,500 of the money, and he served a term of seven years in the Missouri Penitentiary. During the time he was at large he increased the perplexity of the men who were trying to capture him by writing to a St. Louis newspaper in defense of the character of the express messenger whom he held up, the messenger being at that time under suspicion for complicity in the crime. In part, Wittrock wrote as follows, under the alias "Jim Cummings:"

St. Joe, Mo., Oct. 31, 1886.

Dear Sir: I write these lines to particularly right a wrong done an honest man. I see by the newspapers that in the account they give of the late express robbery on the Frisco road, some of the papers, and you in particular, throw a kind of suspicion that the messenger, Mr. Fotheringham, had something to do with it. Now, bad as I am, I am still not so debased as to stand by and see a man's life blighted by a suspicion while I can clear it up without endangering myself. I done that work alone, and will now relate exactly how it was done.

Wished to Catch Indian Payment.

"To commence with, I was in Vinita, I. T., a little over a year altogether, I think, when the Indian payment was being paid out, and commenced to think then that I could catch one. After inquiring around a bit I found out that the Adams Express brought it down from St. Louis. I then found out that the Adams company was the only one carrying Government money, and always carried the money to the banks from the different mints throughout the country. I then got a couple of partners, d—d poor ones, I afterward found out, and we arranged to do up the Frisco at Cuba Junction, Mo. I had first come over the route from St. Louis to Springfield several times, and carefully noted the stops which looked very favorable for the work, and came to the conclusion that Cuba Junction was the place.

"After watching around there we found out that the night express sometimes put off beer and saw-mill castings at that place. We then arranged to ship a casting from St. Louis, and when the messenger would open the door to put it off, we would jump in and hold him up, and ride with him to Rolla, which is the next stop, and would give nearly an hour's time, if I remember right. Well, we arranged the plan all right, and went up to St. Louis and bought a cheap cogwheel with a flaw in it, and boxed it up in such a shape as not to show the flaw. I then took it down to the express office one afternoon, I think in November last, and had it billed out as a casting, and I told the clerk at the office that it was needed at once at Cuba Junction, as parties would ride over from Oak Hill. * * * I rode down in the front seat of the smoker, and my two partners were waiting for me at Cuba Junction. Well, I jumped off the minute the train stopped and ran up to the door of the express car, expecting to see my two partners there waiting, but they were hanging back fully a hundred feet from the train. The sand had simply left them when the train came in sight, and I hardly felt able to do the work alone, so the casting was put off, and the messenger shut the door right away, and that was all there was of that.

Confederates Lacked Nerve.

"My two braves (?) came up after the train pulled out and told me some cock-and-bull story about being watched, but the fact was they simply lacked the nerve, so I was disgusted with them, and as my money was then about exhausted, I went to St. Louis and worked awhile, and finally drifted around the country to a certain town in Ohio.

"I will not name the town for certain reasons, but while there I fell in with a chap, and we became roommates. This was in January, I think, this year. One Sunday while out sleighriding I told him about my successful failure at train robbing at Cuba Junction. He said he was acquainted with a young fellow named Tom Rape who used to run as an express mesenger on the same road. We then though the matter over, and thought we might get Rape to help us; so we hunted him up, and by carefully worded questions found out considerable about the express business. He then, in in a joking way, asked Rape if he would like to take a hand and we would hold up the company, but Rape was not that kind of a man and had no such inclination, although he did not seem to be very friendly toward the express company.

A Clever Forgery.

"I still had the express business in my head, although my partner was not very sanguine of success. We had found out from Rape by different talks we had with him that a man named Barrett, who lived at Springfield, Mo., was a kind of boss over the express messengers on the road, so I wrote Barrett an inquiry about rates for 100 pounds between certain points, and got back a reply referring me to Mr. Damsel at St. Louis, who would give me information. We then had J. B. Barrett's signature and the style of his letterheads. We then put in every afternoon and half of each Sunday getting type and trying our hand at printing, and finally, after weeks of patient labor, we got a pretty fair imitation of Barrett's letter-heading, but the type on the envelope was too small. We also printed some cards of W. H. Damsel, and were to have one of them ready so, in case the messenger would say, 'Why don't you see Mr. Damsel?' we were going to have a line from Damsel on the back of one of his cards instructing the messenger to pass the bearer, as it was all right. Barrett's handwriting is fearfully hard to imitate, and his 'dear sirs,' and that infernal 'J' that he makes took weeks more of practice every afternoon before I got it down so I thought it would do. We then wrote out several letters of the style of the kind presented to Fotheringham and selected two of the best for the work. I also had a line in lead pencil on the back of one of Damsel's cards, instructing him to let the bearer ride to Pierce City.

Furnished Proof of Assertions.

"Now, to prove up these facts: My partner was to have been riding in the front seat of the smoking car at Kirkwood, and get off there and run to the head and get on the front of the express car and plug the bell cord, so in case of my struggling with Fotheringham and he should get a hold of the bell cord it would not stop the train, for we did not intend to kill the messenger. His nerve all left him when the moment came and he backed out completely, and I took his gun and billy, and put in with them the remaining copies of the letters we had practiced on, and checked the package in the St. Louis Union Depot, under the initials of J. M. Now, if you want a good little gun and billy, go and get out the package checked to J. M. in the union depot, October 26; there are probably 75 or 80 cents charges on it by this time, but the gun alone is worth $10. Also, if you want a good double-barreled shotgun, muzzle-loader, go along the bank of the Missouri River, on the north side, about a mile below St. Charles Bridge, and about twenty feet along the bank. * * * Also, down on the river, just below the guns, I left my skiff and a lot of stuff—coffeepots, skillet, and particularly concealed just west of the skiff, you will find a box of grub—coffee, bacon, sugar, etc. I came down the river in the skiff Tuesday night, October 25-26, from a point opposite Labadie. It is a run of thirty-five or thirty-six miles. The musket I had for my partner, but as he wilted the day before I had no use for it. They should all be there, unless some one finds them before you get there.

Tribute to the Messenger.

"Now, one word as to Fotheringham—I think he is a brave and sensible man. He was taken completely unawares. He was just telling me to lay some packages over in the Arkansas run when suddenly I grabbed him by the back of the neck with one hand and his Colt's revolver, No. 38, which, by the way, I find to be a darned good gun, with the other. I threw his gun out of his reach, and at the same time I threw him to the floor. He struggled as hard as he could to get up, even while he must have felt that I was stronger and heavier than him, and he didn't stop till he seen the muzzle of a gun looking him in the face. He then did what I told him to do, and I think Prof. John L. Sullivan would have done the same. I had him down in such a position that I could have beat him into submission with the butt end of my gun, even had I not been disposed to shoot him. These facts I think will show how the whole business was done. Of course, I have not gone into the little details, such as getting Fotheringham's name from that honest Hibernian porter by telling him that I had found a pocketbook with a letter in it addressed to some man named Parks.

A Weight Off His Mind.

"Now, Mr. Editor, publish this, and by so doing you will lift a weight off my mind for causing a blight on Fotheringham's character. If you don't care to publish it free, charge it up to Jim Cummings and publish the amount of your charge at the bottom of the column, and I will see it is settled within sixty days.

"I inclose you a wrapping from around two of the money packages taken, one $30,000 package from the Continental Bank of St. Louis to the American National Bank, Kansas City, and one $12,000 from the Merchants' National Bank, St. Louis, to the Merchants' Bank, Fort Smith, Ark., so you will have no doubt as to the identity of the writer.

"If you see Fotheringham, tell him I had it in for him for beating me out of that bag of gold when I read the newspapers, but as I have his Colt's .38, and it's a dandy true shooting gun, we will call it square. Well, I guess I had better close up this long rigmarole, but I hope in the future, Mr. Editor, you will not do a person the injustice you done Fotheringham in your issue of October 27 until you have convincing proof instead of mere suspicion. Remember the old adage: 'Honi soit qui mal y pense.' Yours, truly, Jim Cummings."

Stuffed Messenger's Pockets.

From Kirkwood, where Wittrock attacked and bound the messenger, it was a two hours' run to Marshall Crossing, where he opened the car and jumped out. In that time he carefully ransacked the safe, cut open three bags of silver before he would believe Fotheringham's statement that there was no gold aboard, filled the messenger's pockets with silver "for a joke," and tied the prostrate man in such a way that a violent struggle would bring the heavy safe down and crush him. Once, at a short stop, a train official came back to demand entrance to the car, but, finding the door locked and getting no answer to his demand, went away.

On the arrival of the train at Marshall Crossing, Wittrock jumped from the car, following the train on to Pacific when it started. There he found a trail he had made to the river.

Four days after the robbery Wittrock arrived in Kansas City, where, with a man named Cook, who had been asked to join in the scheme, he went to lunch at a restaurant and saloon. While they were at the table a policeman entered. The bag with his loot was in plain view under the table.

"Now, I'm gone," Wittrock whispered to his companion, as the officer eyed the two men, adding as a second policeman joined the first, "It's all up sure—that settles it!"

Acting his part of bravado, he walked over to the bar and asked the officers to drink with him. They accepted, and then joined Cook and Wittrock at the table, where they disposed of oyster stews. As the party left the restaurant, one of the policemen said to his entertainer: "You seem to be flush."

Did Not Suspect Identity.

"Why shouldn't I be," laughed Wittrock. "I'm the man that robbed the Adams express car on the Frisco." The officers left, with no suspicion of the identity of their chance host.

At Kansas City Wittrock was attacked with acute rheumatism, which kept him inactive for nearly a month. Then he went South, finally arriving at Savannah, Ga. Here he stayed until late in December. But the memories of Christmas holidays in Chicago coming upon him, he determined to go North.